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KENTUCKY

### E. R. GENTRY IN GERMANY

Bitburg, Germany.  
Jan. 3, 1919.

Mr. E. S. Albright,  
Mt. Vernon, Ky.

Dear Edgar:—

I suppose if I were writing an  
article for publication, I would  
style this letter "In the Enemy's  
Country".

I left Paris on the night of Dec  
26th, going by way of Chateau-  
Thierry, Chalons, Eprenay and  
Toul, reaching Nancy at ten  
o'clock the next day. I spent a  
couple of hours in Nancy get-  
ting baggage re-checked and ad-  
ditional movement orders and  
left there for Metz at a little  
after 12 o'clock. I was mighty  
glad to have this daylight ride  
across the old battle line, or  
rather lines, north of Metz and  
for once I was glad to be on a  
French train which ran slow,  
stopped often and stood a long  
time when it stopped. I was in the  
same compartment with a Lieu-

tenant who knew the country  
well and it was my first ride in  
a German coach, being one of  
those recently turned over to  
the Allies. There has been a  
great deal written about the de-  
vastation and destruction caused  
by war, but no one can adequately  
describe it. After all I have  
read and what I had already  
seen, I had no real conception of  
a battle field. For miles we  
could only see the effect caused  
by air raids and bursting shells,  
towns destroyed and great shell  
holes every where. Then came  
the towns which were right at  
the front, the last on the French  
side being Pagny, a town of pos-  
sibly a couple of thousand peo-  
ple and completely destroyed. I  
do not believe there was a house  
in it which was left decent to  
live in. From South of this  
place for several miles the rail-  
road communication had been  
cut of course since the beginning  
of the war and the road de-  
stroyed. It has been rebuilt  
since the armistice was signed.  
For several miles the battle line

had extended along this railroad  
with the French and American  
trenches on one side and the  
Germans on the other. While  
Engineers were rebuilding rail-  
roads and blown up bridges as  
fast as possible the trenches and  
dugouts are just about as they  
were left as the Germans re-  
treated. In many places the lines  
of barbed wire entanglements  
were only short distance apart.  
It seemed almost unbelievable  
to me that intricate system of  
trenches and lines of wire en-  
tanglement continued on and on  
for hundreds of miles along that  
great battle front. There are  
still great ammunition dumps  
containing literally millions of  
all kinds of shells still along  
here and all along the railroad  
lines were American soldiers.  
The roads are lined with miles  
of camouflage both on the Allies'  
side of the line and the Germans  
because it must be remembered  
that they know how to camou-  
flage as well as we. In one  
place I noticed what appeared to  
be a small hill but the Lieu-  
tenant told me it was all camouflage  
and that beneath it could be hid-  
den hundreds of men and tons of  
ammunition. At another place a  
narrow gauged railway led up to  
a hill and entered a dugout where  
the officer said two regiments of  
our soldiers had been concealed  
in little underground city. It  
was practically the same on the  
German side of the line. Great  
shell holes everywhere, growing  
larger and fewer right to the  
gates of Metz, which we reached  
after four o'clock. We had un-  
til seven o'clock to get out of  
there but as it soon got dark we  
saw very little of the city. I  
had a good supper in a restaur-  
ant near the station among as  
cosmopolitan group of people as  
you could find. I ate at the  
same table with some American  
soldiers and a civilian Frenchman.  
The waitress spoke both French  
and German; an English and  
Belgian officer sat at another  
table near a group of Italian sol-  
diers who were having the time  
of their lives, while at another  
table four Germans talk glibly  
in Dutch. From Metz I went

to Coblenz by way of Trier  
(called Treves by the French)  
reaching Coblenz about 11:30 at  
night. You know I used to be  
afraid to get into Louisville in  
the night unless I had a room  
reserved, fearing that I would  
get no place to stay, but thanks to  
the last nine months I have got-  
ten over that until getting into  
Coblenz, a city of around sixty  
thousand at midnight did not  
worry me. You know in this  
war life there is always the op-  
portunity to just not go to bed.  
I knew I would not be admitted  
to any hotel without an order  
from the U. S. billeting officer, so  
after about an hour's wait, I lo-  
cated him, only to be told that  
every available place was filled.  
While I was standing there  
scratching my head, two Cap-  
tains and a Lieutenant came in  
on the same errand as myself  
and received the same kind of a  
reception. While we were pon-  
dering on a good place to stay up  
the billeting officer had an idea.  
He said he had beds reserved at  
a certain place for two Colonels  
and two Majors and we might  
risk taking them. The Captains  
said they thought they could be  
Colonels for the night if the  
Lieutenant and I could take the  
part of Majors. As I had sat up  
all night on the train the night  
before, I was ready for anything,  
so after another half mile walk  
and the help of two German po-  
licemen we found the place in a  
private home. We sounded the  
alarm and after a time a middle  
aged woman came to the door who  
spoke fairly good English and re-  
ceived us kindly. She put us to  
bed inquiring if we would break-  
fast there the next morning  
which I did. I do not know  
what became of the officers. The  
next day I was sent to another  
German home where I spent  
three nights. You know under  
the terms of the armistice, the  
German government must fur-  
nish this lodging and it is done  
in this way and is free to mem-  
bers of the A. E. F. Coblenz is  
the headquarters of the Y. M. C.  
A. with the army of occupation.  
I spent three days there before I  
was assigned for work. The peo-  
ple where I stayed ran over  
themselves to be kind to me,  
bringing me coffee to my room in  
the morning, and also in the af-  
ternoon if I happened to be in the  
room and always refusing to take  
a cent for it. The fact is they  
are doing all they can to please  
the Americans, because they ex-  
pect something, and are pinning  
their faith to the Americans to  
save themselves, but they will  
never escape the full responsibility  
of this war and I do not be-  
lieve they will fool even the  
American soldiers by their forced  
kindness. When I see it, it only  
brings to my mind that only a  
few months ago these same  
people were parading these same  
streets with bands playing and  
flags flying because the news had  
reached them that their infernal  
submarines had sunk another  
ship load of innocent women and  
children, or Red Cross nurses  
and wounded soldiers. Why,  
while I was in Coblenz I saw  
post card pictures of the retreat-  
ing German army as it passed  
through with flying colors and  
the population covering them  
with flowers and waving hand-  
kerchiefs just as though they  
were victors instead of a bunch  
of whipped cubs. There has  
come no change of heart that  
quick. They curse the Kaiser  
and yet you will find his picture  
in nearly every room of their  
homes and their 1919 almanacs  
contains his picture on the cover.  
President Wilson may be right  
in saying there is a difference in  
between the German people and  
the German government, but as  
far as making full and just re-  
paration for every atom of expense  
caused by this war, there can be  
no difference. They must pay to  
the last dollar and they can do  
it. They have their industries  
in tact. Their cities have not  
been destroyed. With the excep-  
tion of a few items, they are in

better shape for food than either  
England or France. I bought  
practically the same meal in Cob-  
lenz as in Paris, and at little  
more than half the cost. The Y.  
M. C. A. in Coblenz is serving a  
better meal in Coblenz for two  
and a half francs than they serve  
in Paris or other French cities  
for five. The city of Coblenz  
today looks more like one of our  
American cities than any place I  
have seen since I left home.  
Broad streets, modern build-  
ings, beautiful shop windows,  
stocked with practically every-  
thing one needs. They are  
really so much like our own  
shop windows that it made me  
homesick and yet they howl to  
the world outside that they are  
starving.  
Coblenz is really a lovely little  
city situated on the Rhine at the  
mouth of the Moselle, which I  
think is agreed to be the most  
beautiful river of Germany. The  
principal part of the city is on  
the western bank of the Rhine  
and on a plain just above the  
river, while just across the river  
one of the old fortress castles for  
which the Rhine is famous rises  
to almost four hundred feet in  
perpendicular natural stone or  
concrete, above the river. This  
fort is occupied by our troops now  
and I was told that, with all its  
walls and passageways it would  
accommodate a defending army of  
more than sixty thousand men. I  
talked the military police out of  
a pass to cross the river and  
visit the fort. It is a wonderful  
place and the view for miles up  
and down the Rhine and up the  
Moselle valley is one never to be  
forgotten. This old fort was first  
begun by the Romans in the 11th  
century. Napoleon occupied the  
town on his famous march to  
Moscow and a statue erected by  
him still stands though the in-  
scription has been so changed  
that it seems now to be for a  
different purpose than that for  
which it was erected. The Kaiser  
has a Royal Palace here where  
he spent part of the summers with  
all his court. It will be a mighty  
cold summer before he spends  
another here. I attended an  
American Church service last  
Sunday in the Chapel of this  
palace in the afternoon and  
another at evening in another  
part of it known as Festival Hall,  
which has been taken over for  
entertainment purposes for the  
American army. I forgot to tell  
you that while standing on top of  
of the old fort, Logan Hastv's  
son, Albert, walked right into  
me. I had not even heard of  
him since I left him at Camp  
Taylor. I had a nice talk with

him and was certainly glad to  
see him. He told me there were  
some Rockcastle boys in this old  
fort across the Rhine, but I only  
had a short time before my pass  
over the river was out, I did not  
get to see them. I saw one  
other but as I did not know him  
very well at home cannot call  
his name. I crossed over the  
river in a ferry but as I came  
back I walked the old pontoon  
bridge which is one of the oldest  
things about the town and pic-  
tures of which you have doubt-  
less seen many time.  
On the last day of the year, I  
was sent up here to Bitburg, a  
little town several Kilometres  
from the Luxemburg border and  
almost due north of Trier  
(Treves). I caught a daylight  
ride from Coblenz up the Mo-  
selle to Trier and it is wonder-  
ful ride. The railroad winds  
right up the beautiful river, the  
banks of which look almost like  
cliffs for hundreds of feet. It  
does not look like a goat, much  
less a man could get up them  
and yet these Germans have ter-  
raced those banks from the high-  
water mark up and have them  
covered with vineyards. In the  
first place I do not see how they  
have done it and then how in the  
world it can pay for the outlay of  
money and labor necessary to do  
it. I do not like this country or  
the people. One thing I suppose  
is that I had just gotten to where  
I could get around among the  
French with the few words I had  
picked up and now I am simply

thrown into another world as far  
as language is concerned and can  
not even ask for a drink of water.  
I certainly hope I will not have  
to stay long. I am to be attached  
to the 34th ammunition train of  
the 89th division who are lo-  
cated about eight miles out of  
this town. The 89th claims they  
will be the first of this part of the  
army to go home and I cer-  
tainly hope so, because I think  
that will at least give me a chance  
to get back into France.  
This is a mighty long letter,  
but will possibly be the last one  
I will write you at least for a long  
time. I want to give everybody  
my very best wishes for a happy  
new year. One of the big things  
that is worrying me now is that  
I cannot charter a ship, so I can  
bring all my friends a souvenir.  
Just learned that Will Robinson  
was down at Trier, a short dis-  
tance from here. You find our  
boys everywhere. When it is all  
known you are going to find that  
our Rockcastle soldiers have  
made a record of which we need  
not be ashamed. I knew they  
would do it.  
With best wishes for all,  
I am, as ever,  
E. R. GENTRY.

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